

OCALA STUD STALLION MONTBROOK HAS PROVEN HIS QUALITY WITH A WIDE VARIETY OF INFLUENCES

BY MATT O'NEIL

There is no doubt that Montbrook is the class of the Florida stallion ranks. From relatively humble beginnings, standing for an initial fee of \$3,000, the son of Buckaroo has sired 23 blacktype stakes winners (and one non-blacktype winner not included in this survey), eight graded winners and two grade one winners. With that kind of success he's worth every penny of his \$20,000 2004 fee.

Overall, Montbrook, as most good sires tend to do, has worked with a wide variety of influences. But what makes Montbrook tick? Or better put, what kind of mares have clicked with Florida's premier stallion? We've taken a look at the six-generation pedigrees of all his blacktype stakes winners and his graded stakes-placed runners to find out. In all, Montbrook has sired 30 such runners (as of mid-February) out of 28 individual mares. It is those 28 mares that were analyzed.

Montbrook is clearly an outcross stallion, meaning that he carries none of the major influences found in many American pedigrees, namely Northern Dancer, Raise A Native, Bold Ruler and Turn-To. We know from a previous study that these influences are the four most prevalent among the stallion population currently standing in Florida. While we just don't know how the stallion numbers translate into the mare population, it should be safe to assume that Montbrook has seen a number of mares that carry these ancestors.

Of those major influences, Bold Ruler appears in 13 or 46% of the 28 mares that have produced top runners by Montbrook. Half of his graded and one of his grade one winners are out of Bold Ruler-influenced mares; Trust N Luck (G1), Shake You Down (G2), Ms. Brookski (G2) and Pure Precision (G3). Bold Ruler is carried by 45% of the Florida stallion population and Montbrook has worked with a wide array of Bold Ruler strains. The Bold Ruler son Cornish Prince is represented three times and another son Bold Lad twice. Overall, Montbrook has sired a top runner with mares carrying 11 different Bold Ruler strains (including the two strains carried by Decorated Dancer, dam of Changing Otheguard).

Ten Northern Dancer influenced mares (36%) have produced stakes winners or graded-placed runners by Montbrook. Five of his graded winners are among this group—the four mentioned previously out of Bold



PHOTO BY BILL DENVER



PHOTO BY NYRA

Ruler influenced dams as well as grade three winner Max Forever. Among the individual Northern Dancer strains, Nijinsky II appears in the pedigrees of three of the mares, while Lyphard shows up in a pair. Interestingly Montbrook has sired three top runners with mares carrying a daughter of Northern Dancer. Northern Dancer is found in 47% of the current Florida stallion population.

Montbrook has had mixed success with Raise A Native, who is carried by 41% of Florida stallions.

SHAKE YOU DOWN and CHAPEL ROYAL, two of MONTBROOK'S accomplished runners.

Eight of the 28 mares sampled (29%) carry that ancestor, but only one has produced a graded winner by Montbrook, Cricket Box, dam of the grade one-winning Outofthebox. There are some interesting things of note when the Raise A Native strains are broken down. While Mr. Prospector is carried by 45% of Florida stallions, only three mares (11%) carrying Mr. P have produced a top runner by Montbrook. That figure is the same for another Raise A Native son, the much less ubiquitous Majestic Prince.

It does appear that Montbrook is underperforming with Turn-To influenced mares. Turn-To is found in 47% of the Florida stallion population yet only five mares (18%) carrying that influence anywhere within five generations have produced a top runner by Montbrook. None of those five are graded winners, although the minor stakes winning Thunderello did run a strong second in the 2002 Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1). Among the Turn-To strains, Sir Gaylord, has by far worked the best as he is found in three of the five mares.

Some other ancestors that seem to be underperforming with Montbrook, based on their likely prevalence in the Florida mare population are In Reality and his damsire Rough'n Tumble. Based on the stallion numbers, In Reality is found in 15% of Florida stallions, while Rough'n Tumble is found in 20%. However, only two (7%) In Reality influenced mares have produced top runners by Montbrook and only a total of three mares (11%) carry Rough'n Tumble.

We mentioned before that Montbrook is an outcross stallion. However, a quarter of his top runners are inbred (4x4 or closer). Anecdotally, and based on the stallion population numbers, the prime candidates to duplicate with Montbrook are his male line ancestors Tom Fool and Buckpasser. The former is found in 35 % of current Florida stallions while Buckpasser can be found in 22%. Overall, Montbrook has sired top runners with 11 (39%) Tom Fool influenced mares with four of those (11%) through Buckpasser. The grade two-placed Autumn Creek is inbred to Buckpasser at 3x3, the only top runner by Montbrook to carry inbreeding (of any kind) so close. Sweet Sixteen and Via Gras are both inbred to Buckpasser at 3x4, while Fort Lauderdale is so inbred at 3x5.

Heroofthegame and Ms Brooksi are inbred to Tom Fool at 4x4. Grade one Super Derby winner Outofthebox is inbred to the mare Old Bess at 4x3 and that is the only close inbreeding carried by a Montbrook top runner outside of Buckpasser/Tom Fool. His pedigree is rather interesting in that Old Bess is Montbrook's third dam and the second dam of Cricket Box. Cricket Box also carries Tom Fool and proponents of Rasmussen Factor inbreeding to (supe-

rior) females will note how nicely this cross is reinforced on both sides of the pedigree.

One of the more obscure influences that really he has seemed to click is Never Bend. With no male-line, Never Bend survives in only 8% of Florida stallions. However, six of the 28 (21%) mares sampled carry Never Bend. Among those six are the dams of grade two winner Chapel Royal and grade three winner Pure Precision. Never Bend, like Bold Ruler is son of Nasrullah and that transcendent influence appears somewhere in the pedigrees of 86% of the top runner producers with Montbrook. While it's hard to get away from Nasrullah, the farther back you go in American pedigrees, the fact that you don't have to go back all that far with these mares is instructive. Sixteen of the 24 mares that carry a "visible" strain of Nasrullah do so in the fourth generation or closer, with five showing Nasrullah in the third generation. Other prominent ancestors, born in the early 1940's like Polynesian (50%) and Princequillo (46%) also show up in good numbers leading to the conclusion that Montbrook has worked best or at least very well with older pedigree influences and consequently older mares. However that turns out to be only (literally) half the story.

Montbrook's versatility also seems to extend to the ages of the mares he has produced top runners with. The average age of our mare sample, at the time they were bred to Montbrook is 10, with a median age of 9.5 years. The younger mares have produced more quality as five of his eight graded winners have been produced by the under ten set though, including both grade one winners and the very good sprinter Shake You Down. Many feel that younger mares have advantages in vitality over their elders, so that is likely part of the story. But it also bodes well for Montbrook's continued success.

At age twenty, Tales of Long Ago, dam of grade two-placed Vision In Flight, was the eldest of the mare sample when bred to produce a top runner, while Cricket Box (Outofthebox) and Mauvin Gway (Shake You Down) were the youngest at five.

Yet another example of Montbrook's versatility is the kind of horses he sires. Looking at just his 23 blacktype stakes winners, six won their first stake at age two, 10 became stakes winners for the first time at three, and three each at ages four and five. As a further testament to their quality, of his six juvenile stakes winners, only Pure Precision and Mont Ridge did not race on to win a stake later at three (or older). It remains to be seen if Chapel Royal will duplicate his juvenile exploits this year or next, but it certainly appears as though the good Montbrooks, like their sire, are anything but flashes in the pan. ■